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ART. II. — DANIEL DERONDA.*

It is a common remark that, since the publication of "Adam Bede," the appearance of a new work by George Eliot is welcomed, not as an ordinary literary incident, but as an important literary event. Accordingly "Daniel Deronda" has been, during the past season, the one book which has attracted all classes of readers, which has been the subject of general comment, and which has elicited criticisms as diverse as the different points of view from which it has been surveyed. During the serial publication of the novel there was manifested as little disposition to deny the reality as the originality of the leading character; for he took a strong hold on the sympathies of readers: questions as to what he would do next, and whether he would marry Mirah or Gwendolen, were warmly, sometimes fiercely, debated; and to judge from the tone of the disputants, he appeared to be a much more real personage to them than Mr. Tilden or Mr. Hayes. The notion of assailing him as a reflecting puppet, a sort of personified meditateness, has sprung up since the almost universal disappointment at the unanticipated conclusion of the story, — a conclusion which many readers have resented as though it were a personal grievance or affront. It would, however, seem that no embodied abstraction could have thus become the object of such intense personal interest; and the vexation at the *dénouement* is the strongest of all proofs that the character has the reality which marks all great imaginative creations.

In classifying works of fiction, the general rule is to discriminate between novels of incident and novels of character; between novels in which the main interest is in what the persons *do*, and novels in which the main interest is in what the persons *are*. "Daniel Deronda" is a novel both of incident and character; and, in addition, it exhibits a wealth of subtle, deep, and comprehensive thought altogether unexampled among the novels of the time. One feels in reading, rereading, and studying the book that, in

* *Daniel Deronda.* By GEORGE ELIOT. New York: Harper & Brothers. 2 vols. 12mo.

respect to mere largeness of intellect, it is unmatched among the works of the most distinguished novelists of the century. Scott, Dickens, and Thackeray may excel George Eliot in their special departments of fiction; but if we apply the intellectual test, and ask which of the four has mastered most thoroughly the knowledge and advanced thought of the age, the judgment of all cultivated persons would be given unreservedly in favor of the author of "*Daniel Deronda*." In sobriety, breadth, and massiveness of understanding, in familiar acquaintance with the latest demonstrated truths of physical, historical, economic, and intellectual science, and in the capacity to use these truths as materials for a philosophy of nature and human nature, this woman is the acknowledged peer of such men as John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer. Leaving out of view the peculiar powers which make the great novelist, and fastening our attention on the understanding alone, it is obvious that George Eliot might hold, in one corner of her broad brain, all that portion of Scott's intellect which dealt with the philosophy of history as distinguished from its picturesqueness; in another corner, all that part of the intellect of Dickens which, in dealing with political economy, was prone to substitute benevolent sentiments for inexorable laws; and in still another corner, all that portion of the intellect of Thackeray which penetrated beneath the social shams he pitilessly satirized to the principles which make society possible. It is difficult to conceive of either of these eminent masters of characterization as adequately treating any subject requiring great powers of analysis and generalization; but a thoroughly reasoned treatise on ethics, politics, social science, or the philosophy of history from the pen of George Eliot would excite no surprise at all, as her intellect is plainly competent to such a task. This general largeness of mind, this tranquil grasp of the outlying problems of human life and human destiny, distinguishes her from all the other novelists of the age; for she not only looks at things and into things, but she looks through things to the laws of life they illustrate and by which they are governed. She dispels that pleasant illusion, fondled by most writers of fiction, that the individual is dominant in human affairs, and gets what he desires if he has the energy to struggle for it. The pitiless laws of existence, which are independent of human wish or will, and which crush all who oppose their action, she

perceives with a sad certainty of insight. To the egotist and sentimentalist, raging or moaning at the constitution of things, Nature seems cruel and Providence seems cruel; but she, looking at individuals in relation to the mighty external forces they obey or resist, sees that unselfishness is the condition both of usefulness and happiness, and that Providence has no pets.

But George Eliot has wide-ranging sympathies as well as large discourse of reason, delicious humor as well as affluent thought, a shaping and realizing power of imagination as well as manifold resources of observation and experience. Indeed, all her faculties and qualities are but the varying expression of one large, noble, and opulent nature. In depicting human life her power of characterization stoops to the humblest and rises to the loftiest types of human character. It ranges from Mrs. Poyser to Dorothea Brooke; from the frivolous Hetty to the superb Gwendolen; from the mentally imprisoned rustic worthies who gather at the ale-house in Ravenloe to the crowd of emancipated mechanics who fearlessly debate all questions in their London tavern club; from representatives of religious prudence, provident even in their hesitating trust in Providence, all the way up to such embodiments of the fervors and exaltations of religious genius as Dinah in "Adam Bede," and the Rev. Mr. Lyon in "Felix Holt," and Mordecai in "Daniel Deronda." Indeed, if George Eliot be not what is technically styled "a believer," she is incomparably skilful in exhibiting the interior moods of all classes of believers. The phenomena of the spiritual world, as reported in the experience of saints and martyrs, she has studied with more intentness than the phenomena of the material world; and her great powers are never more conspicuous than when, concentrating the full force of her sympathetic imagination, she records with soul-awakening eloquence the ecstasies and the agonies of lofty spirits, touched, either in approval or reproof, by the spirit of God.

In presenting this wide variety of character, George Eliot employs two methods of characterization, each of which is good of its kind. In the majority of her humble personages, whose minds are necessarily restricted to a few ideas and experiences, the characters are represented as fixed, and the object is to make every act and word logically true to their strongly conceived individualities. Many critics consider these characters as her best, and loudly be-

wail her departure from that region of stagnant village life where she won her first laurels. But she also has the higher art of exhibiting character, not as grown, but as growing, and of indicating the most refined changes produced by external circumstances in the vital processes of its development. By the first method we are made acquainted with persons whose limitations have been reached, and of whom we can only say that they *have* lived; by the second, we become expectant witnesses of the acts of persons whose limitations are yet undetermined, and of whom we can only say that they are intensely *living*. We know what the mother of Felix Holt is from the beginning; we cannot tell what Gwendolen will be until the end. Still, whether George Eliot portrays character as grown or as growing, she ever appears on the scene as a looker-on, pouring forth a stream of remarks, wittily wise or tenderly wise, and all tending to the moral that individual life is subject to the laws of life, and that ignorance, caprice, self-will, and revolt will have a hard time of it whenever they come into impotent conflict with the constitution of things. As an apparently disinterested observer of her own creations and of the progress of her own devised story, she impresses the cultivated reader with a never-ceasing wonder at the singular closeness, applicability, compactness, and fertility of her thinking, whenever an occasion is offered or is seized to insinuate it into the substance of the narrative. This tendency of her mind has reached its height in "Daniel Deronda," which so overflows with thoughts that an ordinary novel-reader, dazzled by the blaze which is intended to enlighten him, is tempted to complain that he is impeded rather than assisted by the subtle meditation which is brought in to reinforce clear representation. A reference to the greatest creator and delineator of human character that the world has ever seen is always in point. Shakespeare is open to the objection that, considered strictly from the point of view of the dramatist, he laid upon his characters a heavy burden of superfluous thought, which retarded the action of the play, and at the same time added nothing to our knowledge of the *dramatis personæ*. Whatever violation of the rules of dramatic art Shakespeare may have committed, and however superfluous much of his thinking may appear to dramatic critics, the great body of his readers could ill spare the undramatic thinking he so profusely poured into his dramas; but if we could imagine Shakespeare as a

writer of novels after the modern pattern, it is easy to conjecture that he would have retrenched some of the maxims of general wisdom which he put into the mouths of his characters to be spoken from the stage, and used them in commenting on his personages and on the incidents in which they appeared. He also might have been his own critic. George Eliot is no Shakespeare; but her simple presentation of Daniel Deronda as a character who, like Hamlet, speaks and acts for himself without any side explanations from the author of his being, might give rise to much of the same kind of criticism which has been profusely expended on Hamlet. There are almost as many Hamlets as there are professors who endeavor, each on his own hypothesis, to reconcile the contradictions of Hamlet's character. But suppose that Shakespeare had himself annotated Hamlet as George Eliot has annotated Daniel Deronda.

Passing from this general consideration of George Eliot's genius to the work immediately under review, the first thing that strikes a careful reader is a certain clumsiness in its construction. Many of the misconceptions regarding the purpose of the book are due to the fact that, in the two introductory chapters, Gwendolen is at once introduced to us as glorying in her pride of beauty, and in her power of domination, — a mood of mind which even the news of the financial ruin of her family does not materially alter. Then follow eighteen explanatory chapters, giving the previous history of Gwendolen and Deronda, up to the time they accidentally met at Leubronn, and the necklace which she had pawned was restored to her by this intruding stranger. A vital point in the story — the fact that Deronda had rescued Mirah from suicide, had placed her with the Meyricks, had heard her pathetic narrative, and had been strangely impressed by such an entirely novel example of guileless maidenhood, before he saw Gwendolen at the gaming-table — is a fact generally overlooked by readers, owing to the method which the author has adopted of beginning her novel, as it were, in the middle. George Eliot is understood to be a writer who never reads any reviews of her books, and undertakes the task of being her own critic. We think that, on the whole, she is her best critic. In the explanatory headings of many of her chapters, intended to give the clew to her meaning, she imitates very happily the quaint, stately, and picturesque diction of English prose-writers, two centuries or two cen-

turies and a half old, reproducing the style of Hooker or Burton or Sir Thomas Browne as felicitously as Scott reproduced the style of the Elizabethan dramatists in his frequent quotations from an imaginary "Old Play." But the starched sentences placed at the head of the first chapter of "Daniel Deronda," the object of which is to explain why she does not begin at the natural beginning of the story, are pedantic and heavy, giving no adequate idea of her usual skill in this kind of imitation. She certainly had at hand, in Spenser's letter to Raleigh, expounding the design of the "Faery Queene," a sentence pat to her purpose. A historiographer, says Spenser, "discourseth of affairs orderly, as they were done, accounting as well the times as the actions: but *a poet thrusteth into the midst*, even where it most concerneth him, and there recouring to things forepast, and divining of things to come, maketh a pleasing analysis of all." In addition to the ingenious and elaborate obscurity of the heading of the first chapter, the first sentence in the chapter itself contained a word which seemed to most novel-readers portentously scientific, and which has enabled gentle dullness to indulge in many a feeble joke. "What," the author asks in reference to Gwendolen, — "what was the secret of form or expression which gave the *dynamic* quality to her glance?" If the mild scoffers at this terrible word will intermit their innocently malicious giggling for a few minutes, and turn to their dictionaries for the information they so evidently need, they will not only ascertain the meaning of dynamic, but understand why the term is specially applicable to the genius of the author who sees fit to use it.

Casting aside such obvious objections to "Daniel Deronda," and coming directly to the question whether the novel indicates a decline in George Eliot's power of creating character, and of vividly imagining scenes and incidents in which character finds adequate expression, we are inclined to think that it shows a palpable advance on her previous works. Of course it is hopeless to argue against those who consider her genius limited to the representation of the rustic English life pictured in "Silas Marner," or the provincial town life so delightfully portrayed in "Middlemarch." Such persons are so confirmed in their just admiration of these that they resent her abandoning the secure field, which she has made her own, for the new regions which she seems ambitious

to occupy. They are not affected by the argument that the author may naturally be reluctant to go on repeating herself. Indeed, they have something of the feeling of the boy who, having taken an extravagant liking for one juvenile story, insisted that his uncles, aunts, and cousins, if they desired to make him a present of a book, should select that particular tale, because, he said, he *knew* that to be good, and was uncertain as to the interest of any others. But the hopeful sign in "*Daniel Deronda*" is, that the range of George Eliot's genius has not yet reached its term, that her vigorous faculties show no symptoms of decay in their present exercise on new phases of human life and human character, that the power which delighted us in her previous novels is independent of circumstance and locality, and that she will hereafter produce works as different from "*Daniel Deronda*" as "*Daniel Deronda*" is from "*Adam Bede*."

The special admirers of George Eliot, those who think her genius is confined to the reproduction in vivid forms of the rustic life of that portion of England in which she happened to pass her youth, must admit that in the present work she has shown almost equal power in depicting the life of the gentry and of the upper middle classes of provincial England. The general tone of the society is finely indicated, while every individual in it is distinguished from the rest by some subtle stroke of characterization. In the first book, Mrs. Davilow and her daughters, Mr. and Mrs. Gascoigne, Rex Gascoigne, Anna Gascoigne, the Arrowpoints, Lord Brackinshaw, are made as well known to the reader as to Gwendolen, the heroine. Passing to the city, what an image of domestic life is presented in the household of Mrs. Meyrick and her daughters! Some readers may be intolerant of Mordecai the Jew; but nobody can fail to enjoy the exquisite humor exhibited in delineating the Jewish family of the Cohens, including Cohen himself, his wife, his mother, his astonishing little son, Jacob, and his hardly less astonishing little daughter, Adelaide Rebekah. Sir Hugo Mallinger and Lady Mallinger, Mr. Bult, Mr. Vandernoodt, Mr. Lush, not to mention others who move more or less in what is called London society, are as real as any persons we daily meet in the street. The perfection of characterization in all these persons, whether they are honest or dishonest, is unmarred by a single touch of caricature. The representation is bold and distinct; but

no temptation of wit or humor, no impulse of sympathy or antipathy, is allowed to exaggerate or obscure a single trait of their natures; and the mirror the author holds up to them reflects their mental and moral lineaments so exactly that each of them would, in a moment of pleased or vexed surprise, wonderingly admit the accuracy of the likeness.

Should we, therefore, confine our attention merely to such persons as we have named, the book might properly be considered as a remarkable one; for characterization of such nicety, fairness, truth, and strength is an exceptional gift, and a more exceptional virtue, among the novelists of the time. But, in this praise, we have not touched the heart of the book, or named the characters which should justly give it a prominent position among the great novels of the century. Still, let us first quote a few examples of George Eliot's power in describing, characterizing, and satirizing some of the aspects of English life. The opening chapter of the book places us as spectators in one of the fashionable gambling-hells of Germany, — "one of those splendid resorts which the enlightenment of ages has prepared" for this species of pleasure "at a heavy cost of gilt mouldings, dark-toned color, and chubby nudities, all correspondingly heavy, — forming a suitable condenser for human breath belonging, in great part, to the highest fashion, and not easily procurable to be breathed in elsewhere in the like proportion, at least by persons of little fashion." Can anything exceed the penetrating force of this satire? The foul air of the gambling-room, which makes those who breathe it physically sick, has still the grand recommendation of being the condensation of all the breaths of all the people of fashion therein congregated, and therefore gives a kind of gentility to every plebeian who has the good fortune to inhale it! Again, how many persons are hit in this description of Mr. Vandernoodt, a diner-out welcome in every society: "He was an industrious gleaner of personal details, and could probably tell everything about a great philosopher or physicist except his theories or discoveries." As to scholarship, this gentleman professes his contempt for those "Dryasdust fellows, who get a reputation by raking up some small scandal about Semiramis or Nitocris. . . . I like to know the manners of my time, — contemporary gossip, not antediluvian. . . . I don't care a straw about the *faux pas* of the mummies." The picture of the Meyrick family is

probably as felicitous as anything that the author has ever done in what some people deem her limited sphere of characterization. Both the reality and the loveliness of the mother and her daughters are so startlingly true that we can hardly resist the impression, as we read, that they are among our valued personal friends and acquaintances. The account of their reception of Mirah, when Deronda, after rescuing her from suicide, brings her to their perfect home, and the scene in which Herr Klesmer appears to pass judgment on Mirah's musical capacity, are admirable illustrations of the writer's power of giving lifelike reality to what she sympathetically depicts. It is odd that such a mother, shrewd, kind-hearted, and practical, should have for a son such an eccentric, tempestuous, and scatter-brained personage as Hans Meyrick, — an artist of "irregular" genius, subject to fits of incalculable caprice, yet commonly held within bounds by his affectionateness, and distinguished from the Bohemian of Balzac by a restraining British constitution of nature. He is one of the most marked among the minor characters of the novel, radiant in humor, and good-humor, and never knowing what he will say or do a moment beforehand. Deronda objects to Agrippa's legs, in one of his historical pictures. Hans replies that they are good realistically. "But they are impossible legs," urges Deronda. "Then," Hans retorts, "they are good ideally. Agrippa's legs were possibly bad; I idealize that and make them impossibly bad. Art, my Eugenius, must intensify." It is hopeless to caution him against the effects of his sudden impulses. "Since," he says, "I got into the scrape of being born, everything I have liked best has been a scrape for myself or for somebody else. My painting is the last scrape; and I shall be all my life getting out of it." When Deronda assures him that Mirah can, under no conceivable circumstances, marry him, the half-grave, half-merry egotist is not a bit abashed. "I go," he declares, "to science and philosophy for my romance. Nature designed Mirah to fall in love with me. The amalgamation of races demands it, the mitigation of human ugliness demands it, the affinity of contrasts assures it. I am the utmost contrast to Mirah, — a bleached Christian, who can't sing two notes in tune. Who has a chance against me?"

A character almost as picturesque as Hans is Herr Klesmer, "a felicitous combination of the German, the Slave, and the Semite,

with grand features, brown hair floating in artistic fashion, and brown eyes in spectacles," — one of those forcible men who hold their right rank in well-dressed, well-bred conventional society, though their clothes never fit them, and though their manners have a brusqueness which is ever in danger of violating the conventional rules of good breeding. As an artist who has identified himself with his art, his imperiousness of demeanor and emphasis of speech seem to spring from his feeling of the dignity of the art he represents, rather than from any arrogance of personal disposition. In all matters regarding music he speaks with that dogmatism which is based on certain knowledge; what Mrs. Gamp calls "the torters of the Imposition" could not wring from him a polite compliment to a mediocre performance; and Gwendolen's beauty, on his first introduction to her, only forced from his gallantry the equivocal praise, "It is always acceptable to *see* you sing!" Nothing can be better than his retort on Mr. Bult, — the "political platitudinarian," whose "monumental obtuseness" he hated as the awkward mimicry of the dignity of a gentleman, — when that wooden politician patronizingly informed him that he was sure he had too much talent to be "a mere musician." "No man," replied Klesmer, "has too much talent to be a musician. Most men have too little. A creative artist is no more a mere musician than a great statesman is a mere politician. We are not ingenious puppets, sir, who live in a box and look out on the world only when it is gaping for amusement. We help to rule the nations and make the age as much as any other public. We count ourselves on level benches with legislators. And a man who speaks effectively through music is compelled to something more difficult than parliamentary eloquence." Mr. Bult's only resource is to turn to Miss Arrowpoint, and, with undiminished gravity to remark, "Your pianist does not think small beer of himself." But the great musician's whole soul comes out only in his interview with Gwendolen, when she desires to learn his judgment as to her capacity to succeed in public as an actress and singer. The emotions which are stirred during the conversation give all the more emphasis to the thoughts which it elicits. The interview is strictly an event in the progress of the story, for Gwendolen's fate depends on Herr Klesmer's decision; but the principles of art announced in it apply to hundreds of other cases, which resemble Gwendolen's only

in the one particular need of converting a means of elegant amusement into a source of income. Fortune enables a great number of young women to acquire sufficient training in music to sing and play acceptably in drawing-rooms, and sufficient training in elocution to win applause in private theatricals; and when a reverse of fortune occurs they are commonly smitten with Gwendolen's ambition to be singers in public concert-rooms and actresses on the public stage. It seems to them easy to win applause from the sensitive, vulgar public, after the fastidious critics of the drawing-room, persons notoriously existing in a constant state of semi-boredom, have condescended to confess, in that fashionable drawl which is the happiest of all developments from the imbecility of the baby's drool, that they have been quickened and inspired by what they have listlessly seen or yawningly heard. But the moment the public is faced, the amateur is made cruelly conscious of the difference between the criticism of parlors and the criticism of theatres. The very persons who would have considered an invitation to the private entertainment as a compliment deserving of any number of compliments in return, become the bitterest critics of the public exhibition; and those fashionable friends who delighted in the performances of the opulent amateur are not wont to buy tickets for the benefit night of the unsuccessful actress. Herr Klesmer unveils to Gwendolen the austere facts of the profession which her self-confidence impels her to choose as a means of recovering fortune. "The gods," he declares, "have a curse for him who willingly tells another the wrong road"; and then, full of remorseful pity and tenderness for the beautiful creature whose expectations he must disappoint, proceeds to unfold those inexorable laws by which alone success in any of the fine arts can be attained. In the course of a hurried conversation, broken now by pauses and now by outbursts of passion, a true philosophy of art is evolved. That conversation, indeed, is a text-book for all amateurs who aspire to be artists; and if diligently studied will serve both as a guard against the delusions of self-esteem, and as a guide in the paths which lead to excellence.

It would be easy to go on enumerating the minor details of incident, character, and reflection which contribute to make the appearance of this book a literary event. But there are four characters which stand out from the rest with such a stamp of power and

originality on them that they impress the least thoughtful reader as altogether beyond the ken and grasp even of such novelists as Dickens and Thackeray. These are Gwendolen Harleth, Daniel Deronda, Mirah, and Mordecai.

Gwendolen is a masterpiece of characterization. The conception, delineation, and development of this specimen of haughty maidenhood are alike admirable. Many novelists create characters; but few, like George Eliot, create souls as well as characters; and the soul which she creates, embodies, and calls by the name of Gwendolen Harleth, she also constantly watches, so that the reader is allowed to note all that throng of interior emotions, thoughts, volitions, and events which precede outward acts, whether the acts be comparatively unimportant or absolutely momentous. As the beholder as well as creator of this soul, she never seems to lose sight of it, either by day in its conscious feeling and thinking, or by night in its vague fears and perturbing dreams. The scrutiny is as relentless as that of a naturalist who has a jelly-fish under his microscope, and as tenderly considerate as that of a mother who holds her new-born babe in her arms. While freely handling this palpitating mass of spiritual life, her touch is so delicate as never to inflict a bruise. And during all the time that the soul is subjected to this intense imaginative observation and analysis, the bodily presence animated by the soul is as vividly apparent to the external eye as is the invisible, mysterious essence within it to the eye of the mind. This is assuredly masterly characterization; but the statement still does not cover the whole ground. Gwendolen is not only thus made spiritually and physically alive, but the outlying social and spiritual laws she obeys or violates are discerned with the same sureness of insight which penetrates into the depths and records all the changes of her individual being.

It is an indication of George Eliot's skill that from the first she connects Gwendolen's self-assertion and self-confidence with perfect bodily health. Nature teaches humility by deranging digestion as well as by heaping up impediments to the schemes of pride; in both cases humility comes from the perception that the inward power is weak before the outward obstacle; but up to the time that a banker's knavery had made wreck of her mother's fortune, Gwendolen had encountered nothing that was stronger than her own determination. Exulting in her health, her beauty,

and her inborn instinct of commanding, possessing "a decision of will which made itself felt in her graceful movements and clear, unhesitating tones," with "a certain unusualness about her" which acted with the effect of a potent charm, and giving to petty objects, surveyed from her heights of self-exaltation, a kind of "hazy largeness," she reduced all persons in immediate relations with her to the position of confessed inferiors. Her meek governess predicted that she would never rest until she had brought the world to her feet. Her mother, whom she caressed and tormented by turns, always appeared before her "in an apologetic state of mind for the evils brought on her by her step-father." Her half-sisters were compelled to be satisfied when they excited her contempt in a milder form than was common. As to the great mass of human beings, she did not, like Grandcourt, call them beasts, but she was determined not to be sacrificed "to creatures worth less than herself," to make "the very best of the chances that life offered her, and conquer difficulties by her exceptional cleverness." Her ideal "was to be daring in speech and reckless in braving dangers"; but beneath this autocracy of disposition there was a furtive spiritual element, which, though inefficacious as a spiritual restraint, occasionally surprised her by betraying her superstitious liability to fits of spiritual dread. On her first day at Offendene, when her spirit of maidenly domination was at the highest, her little sister Isabel happened to open a hinged panel in the wainscot of one of the rooms, and revealed a picture of "an upturned dead face, from which an obscure figure seemed to be fleeing with outstretched arms." For a moment she shuddered with an unspeakable horror, the vague spiritual dread at the heart of her being shooting suddenly up, through layer after layer of pride and self-complacency, to affright her with a prophetic glimpse of the upturned face of her future detested husband, struggling with death in the harbor of Genoa, and she, the obscure figure of the picture, fleeing in thought from any sympathy with his desperate attempts to regain the boat.

The transitory emotion, however, passes rapidly away; and she proceeds in her career with a supreme confidence in her courage and in her sense of superiority. As a high-spirited maiden, untouched by love, and too full of exulting health to be contaminated by sentimentality, she graciously receives the admiration and

adoration of men as long as they keep at a respectful distance ; but when her cousin, Rex Gascoigne, makes love to her in earnest, and presumes to take and press her hand with the imploring eagerness of a feeling which she does not share, she becomes a mountain of ice, freezing him to the heart's core. "Pray don't make love to me," she exclaims; "I hate it." She feels a maiden's horror at the slightest profanation of her person. She cannot endure the thought that her hand or lip should be passionately touched by a man who has not succeeded in taking possession of her soul. After rejecting Rex, she puts her arms round her mother's neck with "an almost painful clinging," sobs, cries, protests that she can't love people, but on the contrary hates them, and ends by declaring, "I can't bear any one to be very near me but you." The emotion is doubtless to be referred to a kind of remorse. She knows that out of mere pride of domination, and of delight in seeing her admirers reduced to the position of slaves to her caprice, she has lured her obedient friend and servant, Rex Gascoigne, to the point of declaring his love. She breaks his heart as cruelly as the most hardened coquette could have done ; and yet she regrets that she has made him miserable. Still, the feeling that prompts her resentment of his familiarity is purely maidenly, and is, indeed, the instinctive defence of women against the first approaches of men to establish a more intimate relation with them than that of friend. It is better that the hearts of men should be broken — easily mended as experience proves them to be — than that the girl-woman should sanction the least liberties taken by that importunate affection which is too eager to ask the question whether it be reciprocated.

It is characteristic of Gwendolen that, never having felt the attraction of love, she should be pleased by the sobriety and reserve of Grandcourt, who conducts his courtship in the grand style, without any of those disagreeable incidents of kneeling, kissing, and fondling which attend the sentimental style of wooing. In Grandcourt's suit her ambition is reconciled with her girlish feeling ; for this rich landed gentleman never pesters her with any of the preposterous outbreaks of emotion which mark the attentions of a lover whose heart flashes forth in every act and word. The courtship seems to be proceeding happily on the way to marriage, when Gwendolen's pride is stung and her conscience wounded by the apparition of Mrs. Glasher and her children, — revealing to her

the fact that she is on the point of connecting her fresh vitality with an outworn life, full of "backward secrets," and respectful to her, not from the restrained fervor of an ardent love, but from the mere exhaustion resulting from a previous passionate experience. She flies from him with a mingled feeling of terror and disgust. At the gambling-table at Leubronn she first comes under the notice of Deronda, who is sufficiently interested in her "dynamic glance" to return the necklace she has pawned. She is recalled to England by the news of her mother's loss of fortune. Her confidence in her power to conquer circumstances, and to make life what she wills and wishes it, is not dashed by this calamity. She resents the idea of descending to the office of being a teacher in a school or of becoming a governess. She aspires to be a singer and an actress, compelling applause from the public as she has compelled it in every private circle in which she has appeared. Herr Klesmer, with cruel kindness, demonstrates to her the impossibility of success in that direction of her talents. Baffled on every side where she thinks to make her will efficient, she at last commits the crime of marrying Grandcourt, with the feeling that his will must yield to hers, and that she can serve Mrs. Glasher, and do justice to Grandcourt's children, while she at the same time carries out her own dream of dominating every society in which she appears. A month of married life proves to her that her girlish, petulant imperiousness is no match for the persisting will of her husband, — a will that has the quality of a crab or a boa-constrictor, which goes on relentlessly "pinching or crushing" without the slightest regard to the active or passive resistance of its victim. "Any romantic illusions she had in marrying this man had turned on her power of using him as she liked. He was using her as he liked."

Grandcourt is one of that detestable class of human beings, instinctively hated by all good men who regard the rights and feelings of others, and by all bad men in whom depravity has not extinguished every generous instinct of human nature. He is just the person who, if he were encountered on our Western plains by the wild, semi-savage freebooters who give the law to that region, would be very properly selected as a person to be "shot at sight." In civilized society, and in civilized society alone, could such a sneering, selfish, cynical, and cruel specimen of aristocratic insolence be tolerated. He looks upon all members of the human race

outside of his immediate associates as simply brutes ; even the persons he necessarily meets, when residing at one of his country-houses, he drawingly designates as "rather a ragged lot" ; and the experience of vice, having destroyed whatever of soul he may have originally possessed, has left him with the exterior manners of a conventional gentleman, with a conventional gentleman's supreme disdain for all creatures who do not belong to his set, and with a conventional gentleman's continual and unlimited liability to be bored. Morally isolated from his race, and selfish to the inmost core of his being, his will grows doggedly strong as fast as his human sympathies contract ; and he deliberately brings this will to bear on Gwendolen for the purpose of slowly crushing out of her all soul and individuality. His parasite, Mr. Thomas Cranmer Lush, contemptuously recognized by Sir Hugo Mallinger as a kind of "half caste among gentlemen," happens to be the object of her special aversion, and this is considered a sufficient reason to employ him in the business of tormenting and insulting her into abject submission. The natural result is, that she hates her husband mortally ; but she fears as well as hates him. In her misery she seeks some moral support. She finds it in Deronda.

Daniel Deronda appears to us one of the noblest and most original characters among the heroes imagined by poets, dramatists, and novelists. His relation to Gwendolen is one fertile in immoral possibilities. "You are a dangerous young fellow," says Sir Hugo Mallinger to him,—"a kind of Lovelace who will make all the Clarissas run after you instead of your running after them." Indeed, the situation is exactly that which French novelists have delighted to represent ; and it is easy to understand how it would have been treated by novelists of such widely differing characters and genius as Honoré de Balzac, George Sand, Jules Sandeau, Theophile Gautier, Prosper Mérimée, Alexandre Dumas, and Charles de Bernard. They would all have agreed in lowering the moral standard both of Gwendolen and Deronda ; they would have made the sensuous elements in their natures gain the ascendancy over the spiritual, in the complications of duty and passion which the polite pitilessness, the ceremonious brutality, of Grandcourt would have constantly multiplied ; and the result would have been an inculcation of the rights of passion in a highly wrought tale of guilt and ruin, in which every step in the downward path would

have been indicated with marvellous precision, and subjected to the most refined processes of psychological analysis. George Eliot pursues a different method, because she, of all novelists, penetrates with most certainty of insight through the hollowness of all theories of the rights of passion, and most firmly grasps the central idea of duty, which underlies all reasonable and moral life. Deronda, when he discovers he has unconsciously established a spiritual mastery over the soul of Gwendolen, and that she looks up to him as the one person she has met in life before whom her pride and ambition are abashed, is placed in a position more delicate than that of a Jesuit priest before a distressed beauty. He is really her father confessor, from whom she hardly dares to expect absolution, but whose aid she still pathetically implores. Acting from the instinct of one of that rare class of gentlemen who have been aptly styled "God Almighty's gentlemen," he comes to her, not after the French fashion, as a half-conscious, half-unconscious seducer, but as a respectful, magnanimous friend and helper, tenderly, wisely, even austere, giving her such aid and counsel as it is in his power to bestow. It has been objected that he offers to her only the commonplaces of consolation, and directs her to use only commonplace means of resisting the hard conditions of her fate. This objection overlooks the fact that truisms are vitalized into truths when uttered from his lips, that these truths have been inwrought into the substance of his character, that purity of heart and justness of judgment have in him been organized into powers, and that neither his heart nor his intellect can be imposed upon by any of the grand French fallacies of passion, which, if followed out, could only rescue her from her present degradation by plunging her into a degradation worse than that she now experienced. In short, he influences her by the magnetism of his character rather than by the agreeableness of his opinions; and the proud creature, reduced to an ignominious vassalage by her detested husband, receives Deronda's practical precepts with a pathetic humility. He is her outward conscience, and sees clearly into her moral condition from the first. "Strange and piteous," he says, "to think what a centre of wretchedness a delicate piece of human flesh like that might be, wrapped round with fine raiment, her ears pierced for gems, her head held loftily, her mouth all smiling pretence, the poor soul within her sitting in sick distaste of all things!" What was the

experience and the discipline which thus made him a discerner and consoler of souls?

George Eliot gives the answer to this question in every mode that a novelist can adopt, — by description, by analysis, by reflection, by the direct presentation of *Deronda* in scenes of intense dramatic interest. The essential fact is this, that *Deronda* differs from other heroes of romance in being a man of comprehensive intellect as well as of comprehensive sympathies. There is, however, a doubt as to his birth, which, while it increases his toleration of other individualities, infuses into his nature a subtle melancholy which somewhat impairs the resolute exercise of his will. Still, the essential excellence of his nature is in his quiet abandonment of that element of self-assertion which enables most forcible persons, indifferent to the rights and interests of others, to obtain the prizes of life. His special peculiarity consists in taking the point of view of all persons with whom he comes in contact or collision, and in his disposition to surrender his own claims to theirs. Such a person must be considered a strange phenomenon in romance; for in romance the reader instinctively sympathizes with the hero who dominates other individualities by the superior force of his own personality. In literature the most remarkable instance of this combination of intellectual grasp with intellectual modesty and charity is found in Shakespeare. That this disposition of mind deserves to be classed among the highest and most difficult of all virtues is shown by the example of Him who, nailed to the cross, in the utmost stress of mortal agony, still recognized the natural prejudices of his tormentors, in his prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they *know* not what they do." Towards this highest ideal of moral and intellectual manliness *Deronda* was obscurely striving from his youth upwards. Self-sacrifice for others was combined in him with a compassionate, interior knowledge of the egotisms, of the sufferings, of the wrongs of others; but while he thus admitted every claim on his sympathy, he was in danger of losing that impulse of moral wrath at wrong-doing which is the general condition of efficiency in the work of well-doing. *Deronda*, however, has his critics constantly by him in the persons of his warmest friends. When, at college, he gives up his own chances in order to aid Hans Meyrick in obtaining a much-needed scholarship, Sir Hugo Mallinger tells him: "My dear boy, it is

good to be unselfish and generous ; but don't carry that too far. It will not do to give yourself to be melted down for the benefit of the tallow-trade ; you must know where to find yourself." Even Hans Meyrick warns him against a disposition he has to take even "an antediluvian point of view, lest he should do injustice to the megatherium." This comprehensiveness of sympathy and intelligence makes him the most charitable and the most helpful of friends ; but it leaves him without a definite aim in life. That aim is supplied by his love for Mirah, the fascination exerted over him by Mordecai's eloquence, and by the discovery of his Jewish descent. It is difficult to conceive how such a character, as elaborately analyzed and represented by George Eliot, could have found an object which would have concentrated its energies, in any of the ambitions presented by ordinary English life. By his nature he is bound to devote himself to some grand, unselfish cause, where a kind of Shakespearian toleration for the infirmities of individuals is to be combined with a hero's purpose to overcome seemingly hopeless obstacles, and a martyr's vision of the grandeur of the ultimate object which it is the hero's purpose to realize. It happens, as it were, by accident, that his latent capacity for self-consecration is directed to the re-establishment of the Jewish nation. He had become keenly aware that his "too reflective and diffusive sympathy" was impairing his power of will, and he longed "for some external event, or some inward light, that would urge him into a definite line of action, and compress his wandering energy." In the path of duty he selected the author has been careful to surround him with disgusts and dissuasives such as all ideal reformers, all champions of an overmastering idea, have to overcome. The Jewish family of the Cohens, as far as they are representative, make his grand project apparently hopeless ; and Sir Hugo Mallinger is at hand with his sound common-sense to expose what he deems the illusions of the sense which is uncommon. "I have long expected," he says, "something remarkable from you, Dan ; but for God's sake don't go into any eccentricities ! I can tolerate any man's difference of opinion, but let him tell it me without getting himself up as a lunatic. At this stage of the world, if a man wants to be taken seriously he must keep clear of melodrama. . . . You have a passion for people who are pelted, Dan. I'm sorry for them, too ; but so far as company goes it's a bad ground of se-

lection." Such ugly facts as the Cohen family, and such sensible arguments as Sir Hugo's, have always been vainly presented to minds like Deronda's; and human progress is in some way connected with the refusal of elevated spirits to admit the validity of such facts and arguments.

The commanding influence which raises Deronda from a comprehensive thinker on human life to an earnest enthusiast is found in the character and speech of Mordecai. On this character George Eliot has lavished her utmost skill in conceiving, presenting, and vitalizing religious phenomena. She portrays this consumptive prophet in all the external shabbiness of his plebeian condition, clad in mean clothes, working in a common handicraft, coughing, gasping, choking, as his feeble frame gives scant utterance to the on-rush of his burning words, stretching forth his yellow, skeleton hands in passionate supplication, and his "dark-haired eager Jewish face" illuminated with a holy passion which might befit an Isaiah or Ezekiel. Whatever may be thought of him, it is certain that in no previous English novel has such an example of religious genius been introduced with such startling effect. He may be contemptuously dismissed as a person unwarrantably intruded into a romance; shallow readers may be offended at such an apparition being thrust forward among the Grandcourts, Gwendolens, Lushes, Meyricks, and Mallingers of English life; but the fact still remains that all who really appreciate the highest qualities of George Eliot's genius must be particularly impressed by this wonderful delineation. It is even better and nobler than that of Savonarola as presented in "*Romola*." The loftiest sympathies of the writer's soul are combined with her finest powers of reason and imagination, in the attempt to lift Mordecai to an ideal prominence above the other personages of the book, — a book which is peculiar among novels for the breadth of the view it takes of human life and human character. She endows him with the Hebraic fervor of imagination and intensity of will, while she emancipates him from the Hebraic narrowness of view; and she pours into his passionate speech a Hebraic eloquence unexampled in English literature since the utterances of Hebrew prophets were first translated into our English tongue. Mordecai is one of those enthusiasts who believe that, in the spiritual universe, soul answers to soul, and that influence is almost independent of language. "Why," asks Deronda, "did you write in Hebrew?" "I had," replies

Mordecai, "the ranks of the great dead around me; *the martyrs gathered and listened.*" But the dreadful test to which his enthusiasm was subjected he found in the inattention of his own race. To write in English, he says, from that "breath of divine thought which is within me, would excite men to smile at it, and to say, 'A poor Jew!' and *the chief smilers would be my own people.*" The pathos of this is indescribably deep. It bears a faint resemblance to the chill of heart which a thoroughgoing New-England Abolitionist of the old type might have experienced when he found numbers of free negroes in the Northern States despising their enslaved brethren in the States of the South. Reformers who are captivated by an ideal must expect to meet with opposition from many members of the contemned and degraded race they ardently desire to serve. Mordecai feels the opposition all the more keenly because his physical life is daily decaying, whilst his unrecognized ideas are daily becoming more clear to his soul. In this condition of spiritual loneliness he foresees and welcomes the friendship of Deronda. Upon this fresh, pure life, capable of efforts which are impossible to him, he relies with unalterable trust. He dies content when he is assured that Deronda has become the heir of his ideas, and will devote all the energies of his noble heart and all the resources of his large intellect in the attempt to realize them.

Mirah is commonly voted by critics to be an insipid specimen of feminine excellence. If this be true, it is because the author has failed in conveying to other minds the conception which evidently filled and delighted her own, and has only succeeded in representing a childish nature when she intended to represent a childlike one. Mirah appears to us an exquisite creation, endowed with a simplicity of character which is as forcible as it is simple. An artless Jewish maiden of genius; bearing in her blood and soul the fine results of the inherited instincts and ideas due to a hundred generations of culture; with the artistic sense developed in her to its last perfection, though it is limited in respect to artistic power; fervidly attached to her religion because "it was of one fibre with her affections, and had never presented itself to her as a set of propositions," and also because it was the religion of her mother, whose memory she adores, and whose spiritual presence she constantly feels; a thoroughly natural, genuine, and guileless creature, flying from evil with an instinctive abhorrence, and relying on good, when

she meets it, with an instinctive trust;—she would be proof against the charge of being insipid were it only for one characteristic which is always found associated with power, namely, the identity in her nature of conscience and sensibility with will, so that every monition of duty or prompting of affection is followed by its appropriate act. Her virgin ingenuousness stands every test and trial; the sharpest scrutiny cannot detect in her the slightest proclivity to falsehood; and the quaint, odd way she has of unexpectedly flashing her sincerities of feeling on the attention of those who are more experienced than herself, lends piquancy and fascination to her ebullient but resolute innocence. Deronda passes unconsciously from the position of a protector to that of a lover; and this change is shown with consummate skill, both in subtle psychological analysis of the moods and needs of these mated souls, and in picturing scenes where their characters have full opportunities for complete self-expression. It is to be added that, in this novel, the softening sensuous elements which enter into the complex passion of love are omitted, in respect both to the attraction which draws Deronda to Mirah and in that which draws Gwendolen to Deronda.

George Eliot has anticipated and answered in the book itself most of the criticisms which have been made upon it since its publication. The chief defect in the story is that it suddenly stops rather than artistically ends. The conclusion is meagre and bears the marks of having been hurried up. There is a remote possibility that the author intends to follow the precedents of Thackeray and Anthony Trollope, and introduce in her next novel some of the leading characters whose fortunes are left undetermined in the present. In that case we shall be informed whether or not Rex Gascoigne eventually marries Gwendolen, and how it fares with Deronda and Mirah in their mission to the East. Still, the conclusion of "*Felix Holt*" or "*Middlemarch*" is as unsatisfactory as that of "*Daniel Deronda*"; in respect to each, the words "*To be Continued*" would seem proper substitutes for "*Finis*"; but it appears to be the fate of this remarkable novelist to raise expectation to the height only more or less to disappoint it, and to give an absorbing interest to characters, whom she abruptly leaves without condescending to gratify that natural curiosity in readers which she has labored so successfully to excite

EDWIN P. WHIPPLE.